

ICPS newsletter

Educational reform is another step by Ukraine towards Europe

Ukraine inherited its educational system from the Soviet Union, which provided a high level of mass literacy and in-depth training in the technical and natural sciences. Our specialists are able to work in other countries, but cannot apply knowledge in their home country yet. Therefore, educational reform in Ukraine should not only preserve the current level of educational potential, but it also needs to transform this potential into a powerful tool for developing society. For this, a critical analysis of the state of the Ukrainian education system should be performed, considering the latest world trends and prospects of system to enter world educational services markets. European integration is one of Ukraine's strategic priorities, but a consistent state policy has not yet been developed in this sphere. In particular, changes in the education system to date (moving toward long-term economic growth) do not support integration

According to ICPS experts, this primarily results from a still strong influence of the Soviet concept of education, as it was considered a state monopoly and was to satisfy the demand of the totalitarian regime for workers. In the Soviet Union, education supported the policy of confronting the West, and, as a result, administration and organisation in this sphere, as well as the content of educational programs, excluded even the thought about world or European integration. Ukraine inherited this educational system, which is totalitarian in nature, self-contained and closed. The Soviet education system differs from education systems in democratic countries in the following aspects:

- Ways of acquiring education and graduation procedures differ from standards and procedures used in other countries.
- Although "the struggle for peace" was promoted officially, the USSR had been expanding its armaments. Under these conditions, the state educational policy primarily focused on theoretic knowledge and exact sciences. This system of priorities prompted the state of the humanitarian and social sciences,

which were under strict ideological control, to deteriorate.

- The State Plan determined quotas for the numbers of workers and their professions, and then distributed the graduates among existing workplaces. This scheme ensured social stability, but disallowed the education system to react independently to changes in the economic environment.
- The state dictated the content and forms of education as well as common organisational approaches, eliminating the possibility for public control or public discussions of alternatives.
- Individuals could not choose among educational programs based on their regional, religious, ethnic, social, or cultural specifics.

The Soviet educational system had a well-developed infrastructure and functioned quite effectively, ensuring high levels of knowledge in the exact sciences and devotion of the majority of the USSR population to Communist ideas. However, this system could survive only under the totalitarian regime, since it was developed to support this regime.

Authoritarian methods of decision making in the government are one of

Dear readers!

Please note that the ICPS Newsletter was not issued in August 2000

Last week

Co-operation of businesses and the government in developed democratic countries.

The seminar "Ways businesses can influence government decision making" will be held at the International Centre for Policy Studies on September 5, 2000.

While improving the activities of the government, the old methods of lobbying are becoming less weighty and effective. The better the government works, the less likely is the practice to remain of simply laying down one's request on an official's desk. On the contrary, the government in democratic societies is affected by submitting analyses and gathering arguments which reflect the opinions of all interest groups in the society. The mentioned issues will be discussed in this seminar.

Alex Sundakov, the Director of the New Zealand Institute for Economic Research, will be the main reporter. Victor Lysytsky, the Government Secretary, and Oleksandra Kuzhel', the Head of the State Committee for Regulatory Policy and Entrepreneurship, will be among the other participants.

If you wish to receive information about this seminar, please contact Andrii Beha, tel: (380-44) 463-5967, e-mail: abega@icps.kiev.ua.

characteristics of such a system: "the public order" was sent down from "the top", while ideological doctrines prevented interaction in the process of developing an education policy, because the state prohibited an independent public voice and opposition. This approach, very common for the totalitarian regime, becomes a significant obstacle to successful transformation in the democratic society.

Since its independence in 1991, the education system in Ukraine has not yet undergone any cardinal changes, and it is becoming more and more of a significant impediment to the creation of an open society. A paradoxical situation is in place: the state is not responsible for guaranteeing employment any longer but continues to control the content of educational programs and organisation of schooling. Under conditions of globalisation and the information revolution, when competition starts dominating in economic processes, the education system (developed to fulfil special tasks of the Soviet regime) fails to perform its societal function. Clearly, it would be expedient to preserve only the positive features of the existing education system, but its complete dependence on the Soviet past creates a substantial threat to Ukrainian society. Changes in this system should directly relate to where the Ukrainian see themselves in the future; therefore, the following questions are to be kept in mind:

- What system of values should future generations adhere to?
- What can Ukraine attain in the future under a given education system?
- What strategic objectives of society and interests of an individual can be satisfied by a given education system?
- Can this education system provide our children a worthy place in society, and make them competitive in both the world and domestic labour markets? ■

ICPS invites interested parties to participate in a discussion on changes in the Ukrainian education system

The International Centre for Policy Studies offers you to a chance to participate in the discussion of changes in the Ukrainian education system, which are needed in the context of the European integration of Ukraine. Discussions will be held in the framework of the Centre's project "Transformation problems of the Ukrainian education system in the context of European integration" supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Ukraine.

We plan to discuss the following issues:

1. Changes in education in accordance with trends in the labour market. *The discussion will be built on the following thesis: changes in education can help deal with economic and social problems in Ukraine through selling the produce of domestic enterprises in world markets; making Ukrainian goods able to compete in domestic and world labour markets; and transforming the education sector into a profitable and dynamically developing sector.*

Education determines societal development. This relationship has been confirmed worldwide, including both developed and transitional economies. In this context, educational reform becomes an important component of government policy and is no longer the subject of expert discussions, which the public and the government can hardly participate in.

The discussion must help formulate tasks for education policy, oriented to close the gap between the requirements of world labour markets and the quality of educational services in Ukraine. This gap continues to widen, because domestic educational methods lag behind the labour market. Under a global economy, the labour market is constantly developing in an open democratic society, while it cannot do so in a totalitarian society with a planned economy.

2. European integration in Ukraine as a strategic task of education policy. *The key theses of this topic have been formulated as follows:*

- *Changes oriented on the European integration in education can influence the economy and become a means to deal with complicated problems of the Ukrainian society.*
- *The main intellectual resource of educational reforms must be the public and independent experts, while the government education policy must be the mechanism for implementing these reforms. The discussion is to help identify and examine priority changes in the context of European integration that would facilitate the development of Ukrainian society. At the end of the discussion, a plan (organisational project) will be developed for a campaign to implement changes in the education system, which concern European integration.*

The outcome of the discussion will be an analytical note, containing amendments to the objectives of Ukrainian education policy in the context of European integration, as well as recommendations to the Ministry of Education and Science and other government and non-government institutions regarding the implementation of this policy.

The discussions will be held on September 5-16 in the form of a teleconference, exchange of texts, and seminars which will be conducted by the ICPS on September 14-15.

If you wish to participate in this discussion and receive special questionnaires, please send your information to Olga Kolovitskova or Yuri Lukovenko at e-mail OK@icps.kiev.ua, YLukovenko@icps.kiev.ua or contact them by the phone: (380-44) 463-5974. You can also fill in the questionnaire through the Internet by visiting our website: <http://www.icps.kiev.ua>.

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The International Centre for Policy Studies is an independent non-profit research organisation with the objective of improving the Ukrainian policy development process. This is achieved by increasing the know-how of key government officials for policy choices, formulation, and debate, and the awareness of the public-at-large of the benefits of policy.
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